

**Baker Habitat Restoration and Fuels Project
DOI-BLM-OR-V050-2013-014-EA**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)



**Prepared By:
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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BAKER FIELD OFFICE

Environmental Assessment Number DOI-BLM-OR-V050-2013-014

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

BACKGROUND

On the basis of the information contained in the Environmental Assessment (EA), and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the implementation of the Proposed Action would not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the Baker Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (BRMP, FEIS 1989 and 1986), and (2), the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement would not be required (40 CFR 1508.13).

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA or as articulated in the letters of comment.

Context

The purpose of the project would be to move 43,600 acres of sagebrush-steppe, 3,700 acres of mixed conifer forests, and 200 acres of riparian communities toward desired conditions (further detailed under the objectives section) while reducing hazardous fuels present in the area. The Project Area includes the communities of Auburn, Hereford, and Durkee, Oregon which were identified in the Baker County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) (2004) as communities at risk. The plan included recommendations for treatments to reduce hazardous fuels. In addition, Bridgeport, Oregon is a community of interest for the Vale BLM.

The Project Area is adjacent to and intermixed with private lands. Some of the adjacent private landowners are treating both juniper and dry mixed conifer communities on their lands, through agreements and grants with the Natural Resource Management Conservation Service, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Oregon Department of Forestry and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. A collaborative strategy would be sought, including a landscape management approach which addresses watershed enhancement, habitat restoration and rehabilitation, and hazardous fuel reduction for treatments within this Project Area.

Intensity:

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA has considered both the beneficial and adverse impacts: it is expected that in general the project, when fully implemented would result in improved upland and riparian vegetative conditions and lower the risk of devastating wildfire due to high hazardous fuels loadings. Because of various BLM design features, the adverse impacts from the proposed action would cause short-term adverse surface disturbances, but over the long-term site recovery is expected. Under the proposed action, BLM would be able to succeed in both restoring habitat and reducing hazardous fuels.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The proposed action would have positive impacts on public health and safety. The same types of projects considered in this EA are common and well distributed on public land throughout the Vale District, BLM: therefore the impacts to human safety are considered benign.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The Project Area is representative of Burnt River Mountains in vegetative condition and ecological functionality. The Project Area does not contain any designated historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, or wetlands. The Burnt River Area is not designated as a Wild and Scenic River and the Project Area is not considered an ecologically critical area.

Additionally, a portion of the Baker Habitat Fuels Reduction Project includes the Hooker Gulch (OR-035-014) and the French Gulch (OR-035-015) wilderness characteristics units which have been evaluated using current protocols. It was determined that the inventory units do not possess wilderness character.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects of hazardous fuels reduction are well known, documented and are not highly controversial in that reduced fuels equate to reduced fire severity, increased public and firefighter safety, reduce fire suppression costs and easier to control the spread of wildfire. Overall, the methods of vegetation treatment activities, including fuels reduction, are scientifically-accepted methods that can be used to meet resource or management objectives and are not considered highly controversial.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no known effects of the proposed action identified in the EA which are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. All proposed fuels treatment methods are accepted standard practices.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The proposed action does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. All future hazardous fuels and forest health projects, if they occur, would be subject to the same environmental assessment standards and independent decision making process.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

No significant cumulative impacts have been identified in the EA. Other fuels reduction and vegetation treatment projects (both private and public) may be proposed within the Burnt River Mountains in the future. These projects, along with other land use activities in the area would not result in cumulatively significant impacts at the local or watershed scale.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*


No districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were identified in the Project Area and EA. The proposed action would not cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.*


There are no ESA listed threatened or endangered species or critical habitat within the project area. Therefore there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on ESA-listed species as a result of proposed BLM activities

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The proposed action would not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.



Lori Wood
Baker Resource Area Field Manager



Date